

NEWS FROM ED MARKEY

United States Congress

Massachusetts Seventh District

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“WE REMOVED LEAD FROM GASOLINE LONG AGO. NOW WE NEED TO REMOVE IT FROM OUR DRINKING WATER,” SAYS MARKEY

Lawmaker Calls for Renewed Efforts to Remove Lead from our Drinking Water

Washington, DC: Representative Edward Markey, original cosponsor of the Lead-Free Drinking Water Act, today renewed his call to remove the lead from the nation’s drinking water supply. Markey referenced a new report, compiled by the DC Appleseed Center for Law and Justice, Inc., (www.dcappleseed.org/cprojects/lead.htm) which outlines weaknesses in the existing drinking water laws and provides recommendations to reform a failed management system.

“Current law allows unsafe drinking water in up to 10 percent of a community’s homes,” noted Markey. “That is intolerable. How is a mother to know if the tap she uses for her baby’s formula is one of the poisonous 10 percent? People should not have to accept even the slightest fear for the safety of their family when they drink, cook, or brush their teeth with their tap water. But until the law is changed, that fear is very rational,” stated Mr. Markey. “This report underscores the need for Congress to pass the Lead-Free Drinking Water Act. We need to establish a maximum contaminant level for lead in drinking water as measured at the tap.”

Many of the recommendations echo provisions of the Lead-Free Drinking Water Act of 2004. Both the Lead-Free Drinking Water Act and DC Appleseed’s recommendations include provisions such as:

- removal of all water lines that contain lead (either publicly- or privately-owned lines);
- testing of water in individual homes and providing testing results to citizens;
- informing the public about the harm that lead can cause to all citizens, particularly to small children, pregnant women, and nursing mothers;
- promoting the continued use and improvement of corrosion control systems;
- prohibiting the use of any water service parts that contain lead; and
- implementing an effective program of public disclosure and education.

The EPA estimates that lead in drinking water contributes at least twenty percent of the total lead exposure for an average two-year-old child. Despite setting the maximum limit on lead content in drinking water to fifteen parts per billion (ppb), the EPA has stated that no exposure to lead is safe. As stated in the DC Appleseed report, studies have shown that children with low levels of exposure to lead exhibit lower ability in arithmetic, reading, nonverbal reasoning, and short-term memory.

The report notes that the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) has frequently discovered lead concentrations in its service area above levels at which action is required (four of the seven sampling events since early 2000). At the same time, the MWRA is praised for the transparency of its communications program. “It is heartening that the MWRA is setting a high standard of communication. But if the federal standard we are enforcing remains low, we are in danger of serious adverse health consequences for too many households,” Rep. Markey concluded.

For additional information, visit www.house.gov/Markey.